



**Solange Pessoa**

16/11/18 – 16/12/18

For her first solo exhibition in New York, Solange Pessoa (b. 1961) is exhibiting two bodies of work. New ceramic and bronze sculptures from the series *Metaflor-Metaflora*, from which vegetation and feathers spring forth, as well as the final iteration of her *Série Botânica* (Botanical Series) of works on canvas. The conclusion of a decade-long investigation, the *Série Botânica* works elegantly distill the graphic essence of leaves, plants, flowers, and other natural forms with a painterly economy. The actual foliage and organic material which the artist includes in her wall-mounted sculptures resonates with the depicted plant life in her canvas works to act as a common thread linking the artist's two- and three-dimensional work.

Pessoa's practice is continuously rooted in the natural surroundings of Minas Gerais, Brazil, where she lives and works, and whose rich landscape has nourished her fascination with nature throughout her thirty-year career. Foliage filled sculptures with wing-like assemblages of feathers, wool or cotton spread across the walls of the gallery like a cultivated garden that has been left to grow unchecked. This suggests Pessoa's important installation in the three gardens near the famed Museu da Inconfidencia in the historic city of Ouro Preto in 2000, what we might think of as the prototype for these kinds of sculptural installations. There the artist allowed nature to take its course, ultimately overtaking her sculpture and integrating it into the landscape, such that it is hard to tell what is art and what is nature, a confusion Pessoa relishes.

This underscores the kind of impact Pessoa's sculpture has on the viewer. These works draw in the viewer through the familiarity of foliage and feathers as tactile, even sensual materials, as well as establish a degree of strangeness through the biomorphic protrusions out of which the organic matter seems to grow—as if defying the laws of nature. This is the curious seduction of the bodies of Pessoa's work on view. We are attracted by what we do and do not understand, and as such we examine the works as we might a new flower we encounter in the wild. The result is a viewing experience that is at once visceral and analytical.

The works hold up to our inquisitiveness, rewarding us by revealing telling details that Pessoa embeds in each one. These include the painstaking brushstrokes that Pessoa uses to build up each work on canvas, close inspection of which reveals to be full of carefully rendered individual leaves, seeds, stems. While the variegated surfaces of Pessoa's ceramics, which resemble rocks and other natural formations from afar, up close betray the presence of the artist's hand. These marks register as signs of process, establishing the flux and life force that underscores all of Pessoa's work, which is as if animated, in the ancient sense of animism, the primordial spiritual belief that the natural world possesses its own life-force. This layered, surreal presence is what keeps us looking.

- Alex Bacon

Mendes

Wood

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**Solange Pessoa** (Ferros, Brazil, 1961), lives and works in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

Her selected solo exhibitions include *Solange Pessoa, Blum & Poe*, Los Angeles (2017); *Solange Pessoa, Mendes Wood DM*, São Paulo (2016); *Metaflor-Metaflora*, Museu Mineiro, Belo Horizonte (2013); *Museu de Arte da Pampulha*, Belo Horizonte (2008); *Museu da Inconfidência*, Ouro Preto (2000); *Palácio das Artes*, Belo Horizonte (1995); and *Centro Cultural São Paulo*, (1992).

Pessoa received a grant from the Pollock Krasner Foundation (1996/1997), and has participated in numerous group exhibitions in Brazil and abroad including *New Shamans* (2016), *High Anxiety* (2016), and *No Man's Land: Women Artists* (2015), Rubell Family Collection, Miami, USA; *Arte e Patrimônio, Paço Imperial*, Rio de Janeiro (2014); *Mostra do Redescobrimento*, CAPS Musée d'Art Contemporain, Bordeaux, France (2001); and *Heranças Contemporâneas* (1999), *Encontros e Tendências* (1993), *Museu de Arte Contemporânea de São Paulo*.

For further information please contact Nancy Brown, [nancy@mendeswooddm.com](mailto:nancy@mendeswooddm.com).

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